



All around the world, mental health problems afflict millions of people. Young and old from all economic and educational levels, diverse ethnic groups, and religious backgrounds are having to deal with distressing symptoms. What are mental illnesses, and how do they affect people? This magazine will discuss the importance of proper medical treatment as well as how the Bible can help sufferers in various practical ways.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Worldwide Mental Health Crisis God Cares for You		3
		5
1	Prayer—"Throw All Your Anxiety on Him"	6
2	"Comfort From the Scriptures"	8
3	Benefit From Bible Examples	10
4	The Bible Offers Practical Advice	12
How to Help Those With Mental Health Challenges		14
God Promises Perfect Mental Health		16



Vol. 144, No. 5 2023 ENGLISH Produced Each Issue: 24,400,000 Available in 413 LANGUAGES

THIS MAGAZINE, *The Watchtower*, honors Jehovah God, the Ruler of the universe. It comforts people with the good news that God's heavenly Kingdom will soon end all wickedness and transform the earth into a paradise. It promotes faith in Jesus Christ, who died so that we might gain everlasting life and who is now ruling as King of God's Kingdom. This magazine has been published continuously since 1879 and is nonpolitical. It adheres to the Bible as its authority.

The Watchtower (ISSN 0043-1087)
May/June 2023 is published by
Watchtower Bible and Tract Society of
New York, Inc.; Harold L. Corkern, President;
Mark L. Questell, Secretary-Treasurer;
1000 Red Mills Road, Wallkill, NY
12589-3299, and by Watch Tower
Bible and Tract Society of Canada,
PO Box 4100, Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4.
© 2023 Watch Tower Bible and Tract
Society of Pennsylvania.
Printed in Canada.

For the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA: Jehovah's Witnesses 1000 Red Mills Road Wallkill, NY 12589-3299

For CANADA: Jehovah's Witnesses PO Box 4100 Georgetown, ON L7G 4Y4

For a complete list of worldwide addresses, see www.jw.org/en/contact.



Would you like a visit or to receive Bible lessons?

Go to www.jw.org

or send your request to one of the addresses above.



"When I feel extraordinarily well, I become apprehensive. I instinctively know that what follows a 'high' is a plunge to a moody 'low.'"

"I try to take it one day at a time, but sometimes several days attack me at once."

Can you relate to those expressions from individuals who struggle with their mental health? Are you—or is someone you care about—facing a similar struggle?

Be assured that **you are not alone.** Many people today are affected by mental health issues, whether their own or those of their loved ones.

Without a doubt, we are living in "critical times hard to deal with" that are causing many forms of distress. (2 Timothy 3:1) One study calculated that, worldwide, about one in eight people struggles with a mental health disorder. In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an increase in anxiety and major depressive disorders of about 26 and 28 percent respectively.

Our mental health, however, is not defined by statistics. It is about how you and your loved ones feel and how you live your lives.

What is mental health?

Good mental health is a state of well-being where you feel good and can function well. You can cope with normal stresses, work productively, and feel satisfied with life.

A mental disorder . . .

- IS NOT the result of personal weakness.
- IS a medical condition that causes significant distress and disrupts a person's thinking, emotional control, and behavior.
- Can often upset a person's ability to relate to others and to handle the daily demands of life.
- Can affect people of any age, culture, race, tribe, religion, educational background, or income level.



Getting help for mental health problems

If you or a loved one experiences significantly noticeable changes in personality, disturbed sleeping or eating patterns, or prolonged distress, anxiety, or sadness, you may need professional help to identify and treat the root causes. But where can you go for help?

The wisest man who ever lived, Jesus Christ, stated: "Healthy people do not need a physician, but those who are ill do." (Matthew 9:12) Those struggling with health challenges who receive appropriate medical therapy and medication can do much to minimize their symptoms and can be helped to live a productive and fulfilling life. It is wise for such ones not to delay treatment if the symptoms are serious or prolonged.*

Although the Bible is not a medical guidebook, what it contains can benefit our mental health. We warmly invite you to consider the following articles that discuss how the Bible can help us deal with mental health problems.

^{*} The Watchtower does not endorse any particular approach. Each individual should carefully evaluate his or her options before making a personal decision.

God Cares for You

THE Bible is the best source of spiritual guidance available. It is not a health-care manual, but it can help us in practical ways to deal with distressing circumstances, turbulent thought patterns, painful emotions, and upsetting physical and mental health issues.

Most important, the Bible assures us that our Creator, Jehovah God,* understands our thoughts and feelings better than anyone else. He is eager to help us deal with any issues we face. Consider, for example, two comforting Bible passages:

"Jehovah is close to the brokenhearted; he saves those who are crushed in spirit."—PSALM 34:18. "I, Jehovah your God, am grasping your right hand, the One saying to you, 'Do not be afraid. I will help you.'"—ISAIAH 41:13.

How, though, does Jehovah help us to deal with mental health problems? As you will see in the following articles, Jehovah shows that he truly cares for us in many helpful ways.



^{*} Jehovah is God's personal name.—Psalm 83:18.



Jehovah God invites us to talk to him about any burden that weighs on our mind and heart. (Psalm 55:22) No problem is too big or too small to pray about. If it matters to us, it matters to Jehovah. Praying to him is an important step toward gaining peace of mind.—Philippians 4:6, 7.

How This Can Help

When we struggle with our mental health, we may feel completely alone. Other people do not always understand fully what we are going through. (Proverbs 14:10) But when we sincerely tell God in prayer how we feel, we will find a sympathetic and understanding listener. Jehovah sees us, he knows our pain and struggles, and he wants us to pray to him

about anything that concerns us.—2 Chronicles 6:29, 30.

Talking to Jehovah in prayer reinforces our confidence that he cares for us. We can feel as did the psalmist who prayed: "You have seen my affliction; you are aware of my deep distress." (Psalm 31:7) Just knowing that Jehovah is sensitive to what we are dealing with can do much to help us keep going through difficult times. But he does more than just notice our distress. Better than anyone else, he understands what we are going through and helps us find comfort and encouragement in the Bible.

How the Bible Is Helping JULIAN

How Anxiety Affects Me

"I struggle with anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Anxiety affects me at seemingly random times. One moment I am fine, and the next I feel extremely anxious for no apparent reason. I especially become anxious when I am around other people. I am intensely concerned with what they think of me.

"Those who know of my struggles are very supportive. I have to admit that sometimes what they say is not what I was hoping to hear. But I appreciate their well-meaning efforts.

"At times, my anxiety and OCD make it a challenge to pray. It takes a lot of mental effort for me to concentrate and talk to Jehovah in prayer. My thoughts move very fast—too fast for me to keep up with most of the time. When I get stuck in my own head, it is hard to put my thoughts and feelings into words."

How the Bible Helps Me

"I have learned from studying the Bible that prayers do not need to be lengthy or eloquent to be acceptable to God. Sometimes



when I cannot put my feelings into words, I simply pray: 'Jehovah, please help me.' Even then, I sense that Jehovah understands me and responds to what I need at the moment. In addition to prayer, I have sought medical therapy. I am happy to say that thanks to both of these sources of help, my condition is much improved. It is absolutely worth the effort to reach out to my heavenly Father and experience his loving support."

Help for Youths

On the jw.org website, learn why you can be confident that Jehovah hears and answers your prayers.

See the video **Become Jehovah's Friend**—**Pray Anytime.**





The Bible contains comforting thoughts that can give us the strength and endurance we need to cope with negative patterns of thinking. The Bible's message also gives us hope that emotional pain will soon be a thing of the past.

How This Can Help

We all deal with feelings of distress at times; but those who suffer from depression or anxiety may struggle daily with relentlessly painful emotions. How can the Bible help?

• The Bible provides many positive thoughts that can replace negative ones. (Philippians 4:8) It can truly fill our mind with comforting and soothing thoughts that will

help us control our emotions.—Psalm 94: 18, 19.

- The Bible can help us to counteract the thought that we are worthless.—Luke 12: 6, 7.
- Numerous Bible passages reassure us that we are not alone and that God, our Creator, completely understands our feelings.
 —Psalm 34:18: 1 John 3:19, 20.
- The Bible promises that God will put an end to painful memories. (Isaiah 65:17; Revelation 21:4) When we are suffering from disturbing thoughts and emotions, we may find that this promise gives us the strength to go on.

How the Bible Is Helping JESSICA

How Depression Affects Me

"When I was 25 years old, I had a nervous breakdown and was diagnosed with severe depression. I was tormented by flashbacks and intrusive memories. Doctors helped me understand that my depression was related to negative thinking patterns that were triggered by traumatic events in my life. In addition to appropriate medication, I needed therapy to help me identify and correct unhealthy thinking patterns."

How the Bible Helps Me

"In the darkest moments of my depression, I experienced panic attacks, extreme anxiety, and sleeplessness. Often at night I would feel overwhelmed by disquieting thoughts that raced around in my head. As Psalm 94:19 explains, God can comfort and soothe us when we are overwhelmed by anxieties. So I kept my Bible and a notebook of encouraging scriptures near my bed. When I couldn't fall asleep, I would read some Bible verses, thus allowing God's thoughts to comfort me.

"The Bible encourages us to overturn thoughts that go contrary to what we know about God. In the past, I was convinced that I was worthless, unlovable, and useless. But I have learned that such beliefs are actually contrary to the Bible, which depicts God as a loving and compassionate Father who cares

about us individually. I gradually took control of my thoughts rather than allow my thoughts to control me. I have learned to view myself as God views me. This was an important step in helping me break down the negative view I had of myself.

"I look forward to the time when all painful memories and unhealthy thinking patterns will disappear. Knowing that mental disorders will be a thing of the past gives me the strength to cope with my limitations now as well as a wonderful hope for the future when my battle against depression will finally be over."



For More Help:

Read the article "Help From 'the God of Comfort," in the July 2009 issue of *Awake!* on jw.org.

Listen to the audio recording of **the book of Psalms** on jw.org.

Benefit From Bible Examples

The bible Examples

The bible describes . . .

Faithful men and women who experienced "feelings like ours." – JAMES 5:17.

What That Means

The Bible's pages are filled with real-life accounts of men and women who experienced a wide range of emotions. As we read their experiences, we may find a Bible character whom we can relate to.

How This Can Help

We all need to feel understood. But this is especially true when we struggle with our mental health. When we read the real-life experiences of Bible characters, we may identify with them and relate to their thoughts and feelings. As a result, we realize that we are not alone in our distress and we feel less isolated when dealing with anxiety and disturbing emotions.

• The Bible records many expressions of those who felt helpless and desperate. Have you ever felt, 'I just can't take it anymore'? Moses did, as did Elijah and David.
—Numbers 11:14; 1 Kings 19:4; Psalm 55:4.

- The Bible tells us of a woman named Hannah who felt "extremely bitter" because she could not have children and was being cruelly taunted about it by her rival wife.
 —1 Samuel 1:6, 10.
- The Bible tells of a man named Job whom we may relate to. Although being a man of faith, he suffered from deep emotional distress and once said: "I loathe my life; I do not want to go on living."—Job 7:16.

By learning how these Bible characters successfully dealt with negative patterns of thinking, we too can find the strength we need to cope with our distresses.

How the Bible Is Helping KEVIN

How Bipolar Disorder Affects Me

"I was diagnosed with bipolar disorder when I was in my late forties. There are times when I feel that I can deal with anything that life throws at me. But at other times, I feel that life is not worth living."

How the Bible Helps Me

"One Bible character I can relate to is the apostle Peter. He made mistakes that caused him to feel worthless. But instead of staying in that frame of mind, Peter sought the company of friends who cared about him. When I am having a bad day with my bipolar disorder, my own imperfections can overwhelm me and make me feel worthless. Like Peter, I have learned to try to stay close to my friends who want to help me keep moving forward with my life.

"Another Bible character who is of great comfort to me is King David. He often felt depressed about his situation and regretted his past mistakes. I can relate to him because at times I do or say things that I regret. I find the words of David in Psalm 51 comforting. In verse 3, David says: 'I am well-aware of my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.' This really describes how I feel in my darkest moments, as it can be hard to think positively about myself. But I also relate to David's words in verse 10: 'Create in me a

pure heart, O God, and put within me a new spirit, a steadfast one.' I use a similar appeal to God to help me feel differently about myself. Finally, verse 17 brings me comfort. It says: 'A heart broken and crushed, O God, you will not reject.' This verse reassures me that God loves me.

"By focusing on Bible examples and what God has given me now, I strengthen my hope for the future. The Bible's promises become a reality for me and that really helps keep me going."



For More Help:

Read the article "Living With a Mood Disorder," in the January 8, 2004, issue of *Awake!* on jw.org.



While not a medical textbook, the Bible offers practical and beneficial advice. This advice can help a person who is struggling with mental health difficulties. Consider some examples.

How This Can Help

"Healthy people do not need a physician, but those who are ill do."

-MATTHEW 9:12.

The Bible acknowledges that we may need to seek medical treatment. Many have found relief by learning what they can about their mental illness from reliable sources and by getting qualified professional help.

"Exercise is good for your body."
—1 TIMOTHY 4:8, CONTEMPORARY ENGLISH VERSION.

Investing time and energy in healthy habits may help improve your mental health. Such habits include sticking to a regular exercise routine, following a healthy diet, and getting enough sleep.

"A joyful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit saps one's strength."—PROVERBS 17:22.

Reading encouraging Bible passages and setting reasonable and reachable goals can help maintain a happy spirit. A positive and hopeful attitude can help you to stay emotional-

ly balanced as you cope with your mental health challenges.

"Wisdom is with the modest ones."—PROVERBS 11:2.

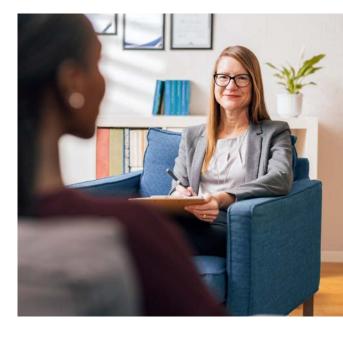
You may find that you are not able to do everything that you want to on your own, so willingly accept the help of others. Friends and family likely want to help you, but they may not know what to do. Let them know what would be especially helpful to you. Be reasonable in what you expect, and always be thankful for the help they provide.

How the Bible's Practical Advice Is Helping Sufferers

"I felt that something was not right with me, so I consulted a doctor. She was able to diagnose my condition. This helped me to accept the reality of my situation and to learn about available medical options to better care for my health."—Nicole,* who suffers from bipolar disorder.

"I have found that reading the Bible regularly with my wife helps me to start each day with positive, upbuilding thoughts. And often on days when I'm struggling to cope, a particular verse will touch my heart."—Peter, who suffers from depression.

"It was difficult to tell others about my struggle because I was very ashamed. But a



close friend was so understanding and empathetic. She really helped me to feel better and to feel that I was not alone."—*Ji-yoo*, who struggles with an eating disorder.

"The Bible has helped me to be balanced and reasonable when it comes to work and rest. Its wisdom has helped me to deal with the emotional problems that plague me."

—Timothy, who copes with obsessive-compulsive disorder.



For More Help:

Watch the whiteboard animation From Sad to Glad on jw.org.

^{*} Some names have been changed.



We can easily be overwhelmed when a friend is suffering from mental distress. But we can show how much we care by helping our friend to cope with a distressing mental health problem. How?

How This Can Help

"Be quick to listen."—JAMES 1:19.

One of the best ways to help your friend is to listen when he wants to talk. Do not feel that you have to respond to everything he says. Acknowledge what he says, and try to remain compassionate. Keep an open mind, and avoid jumping to conclusions or being judgmental. Remember that he may say

things that he does not mean and later regrets.—Job 6:2, 3.

"Speak consolingly."

—1 THESSALONIANS 5:14.

Your friend may be anxious, or he may struggle with feelings of worthlessness. By reassuring him that you care, you can be comforting and encouraging, even if you do not know exactly what to say.

"A true friend shows love at all times."—PROVERBS 17:17.

Offer practical help. Instead of assuming that you know how to help, ask what you can do. If your friend has a hard time expressing what he needs, try suggesting some-

thing practical you could do together, such as going for a walk. Or you could offer to help with shopping, cleaning, or some other task.—Galatians 6:2.

"Be patient."—1 THESSALONIANS 5:14.

Your friend may not always be ready to talk. Reassure your friend that you will gladly listen when he does feel like talking. Because of his illness, your friend may say or do things that hurt you. He may cancel plans with you or become irritable. Be patient and understanding as you offer the support he needs. —Proverbs 18:24.

Offering Your Support Can Make a Difference

"I make sure that I am a friend that she can count on. Even though I don't have the solution to her problems, I make it a point to listen to what she has to say. Sometimes all she needs is a listening ear to make her feel better."—Farrah,* whose friend suffers from eating and anxiety disorders and clinical depression.

"One of my friends is so kind and positive. She invited me to her home for a delicious meal. In such a warm and loving atmosphere, I was able to express my feelings. That really encouraged me!"—Ha-eun, who suffers from clinical depression.

"Patience is so important. When my wife does something that upsets me, I remind myself that it is an expression of her illness, not who she is on the inside. This helps me to avoid becoming angry and to be more considerate toward her."—Jacob, whose wife suffers from clinical depression.

"My wife has been an incredible support and comfort to me. When I feel overwhelmed with anxiety, she never forces me to do anything that I don't feel like doing. Sometimes that means that she doesn't get to do something that she would have loved to do. Her self-sacrificing spirit and generosity are irreplaceable."—Enrico, who suffers from anxiety disorder.



For More Help:

Read the article "When a Loved One Is Sick," in the October 2015 issue of *Awake!* on jw.org.

^{*} Some names have been changed.



Through the Bible, God provides guidance and comfort to deal with mental distress.

But God has done even more. He has promised to remove the very causes of mental disorders permanently.

When God fulfills that promise, never again will painful feelings, mental distress,

and hurtful memories "be called to mind, nor will they come up into the heart."—Isaiah 65:17.

Jehovah's Witnesses will be happy to help you find out when and how God will fulfill this heartwarming promise.



PLEASE SEND ME A COPY OF Enjoy Life Forever!

To learn more about the perfect health that God promises, accept a Bible course in this brochure, published by Jehovah's Witnesses and available online at www.jw.org

LANGUAGE
NAME
ADDRESS

For mailing address, see page 2. By filling out and sending in this form, I agree that Jehovah's Witnesses may process my personal information to the extent needed to fulfill my request according to the Privacy Policy on jw.org.







Visit the **jw.org** website, or scan code

